

# Iran won't give up nuke plan

REUTERS, Tokyo

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said yesterday that Tehran will not give up its nuclear program, but that ongoing talks with Russia to jointly enrich uranium would ease international concerns over its nuclear ambitions.

His comments came after the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said in a report on Monday that Iran was pursuing a nuclear fuel enrichment program and obstructing U.N. probes spurred by suspicions it is seeking to build nuclear weapons.

"We would like to enjoy our rights like Japan to have nuclear technology, of course for peaceful purposes," Mottaki told reporters after meeting Japanese Trade Minister Toshihiko Nikai.

"The Russian proposal would be a bridge between Iran's right to peaceful use of nuclear energy and (gaining) international trust," a Japanese official quoted Mottaki as telling Nikai.

On Sunday, Iran's nuclear chief said Tehran had reached a "basic" agreement with Russia on a joint venture to enrich uranium, but it was unclear if that meant Iran would give up enrichment work at home, the main demand of Western nations.

Mottaki told Nikai that Iran and Russia were still discussing where to carry out the joint enrichment, according to the Japanese official, who attended the meeting.

Moscow had originally proposed that Iran's uranium be enriched in Russia to clear suspicions that Tehran might divert the nuclear fuel for a weapons program.

But Iran has insisted on the right to enrich uranium on its own soil, saying its nuclear program is to meet increasing electricity demand caused by an expanding economy.

Mottaki told Kyodo news agency later on Tuesday that even if Iran agreed to accept the Russian proposal, it would not suspend its home-grown uranium enrichment program.

In a later meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, Mottaki urged Japanese companies to take part in Iran's nuclear power plant projects.

"I have requested to the Japanese prime minister for participation of the Japanese companies in our 10 to 15 nuclear power plant establishment," Mottaki told reporters.

"Because ... we have to produce 20,000 megawatts energy for electricity."

A Foreign Ministry official later said that Mottaki had merely said foreign participation might be invited to construct the nuclear power plants and had not specifically mentioned Japan.

Monday's IAEA report was circulated to the watchdog's board members.

## Khaleda proposes

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ensure its victory by vote rigging?" she asked, adding, "But nobody can allow such a demand to be fulfilled."

In her one-hour-and-42-minute speech, Khaleda detailed what she claimed were her government's successes in different sectors.

bers before they meet on March 6 to discuss it. The report will be forwarded to the U.N. Security Council, where the United States and European powers are likely to call for sanctions against Iran.

The stand-off has put Japan in a bind between its policy to stay in diplomatic sync with the United States, its main security ally, and its plans to develop an Iranian oil field that Tokyo sees as vital to its energy strategy.

Nikai said Japan did not want to see Iran, its third-largest oil supplier, isolated within the international community, and he urged Iran to give up its uranium-enrichment program, the Japanese official said.

Japan imports about 15 percent of its crude oil from Iran, or some 500,000 barrels a day, and has maintained good ties with the Islamic Republic, even at the expense of upsetting Washington.

Despite U.S. objections, Tokyo went ahead two years ago with a deal on a billion-dollar project to develop the Azadegan oil field in Iran, estimated to hold the world's second-biggest single oil reserves.

The Japanese government has a 36 percent stake in Japan's biggest oil developer, INPEX Corp., which plans to develop the southern part of Azadegan, estimated to hold 26 billion barrels of oil.

## China to share hydrological data on river Brahmaputra

BDNEWS, Dhaka

China will share hydrological data and information on the river Brahmaputra to enhance flood forecasting and warning capacity of Bangladesh.

An agreement in this regard was reached at the ministerial level meeting in Beijing Monday under the purview of the bilateral MOU on Cooperation in Water resources.

Water Resources Minister Hafiz Uddin Ahmed led the Bangladesh delegation while the Chinese side was led by Wang Shucheng, Minister for Water Resources.

The two ministers agreed to establish a fast mode of communication for transferring the data.

The meeting decided that the designated agencies on both sides would soon work out the modalities for sharing data on the Brahmaputra river.

The Chinese side offered to share their expertise and technology in flood control and water resources management in comparable situations in Bangladesh.

The minister-level meeting will be followed up by a meeting at the secretary-level to determine some specific projects in water resources utilisation and management.

tried to pull him out but failed."

Nikhil told his elder brother to leave hope of rescuing him and go for a safer place. "He was crying while speaking to me," Rinku said.

Suranjan Mistri, father of the two who had been sitting beside, burst into tears hearing Rinku describing possibly the last moments of his younger son.

Later, another concrete slab fell on Rinku and he lost consciousness. Rescuers recovered him unconscious an hour later with injuries all over his body, particularly the right thigh and shoulder.

Suranjan, also a mason's helper, was hammering the building from outside and was also trapped as debris fell on him. Locals rescued him immediately.

The father and his two sons, who hail from Karamjambunia village of Mirzaganj, Patuakhali, would generally work together.

"I went there again on Sunday morning and tried to enter the wreckage to rescue Nikhil but the rescuers dragged me out," Rinku said.

A grieved Suranjan was seen yesterday afternoon walking despondently about the site of the collapsed building, showing Nikhil's photograph to the rescuers and asking if they saw his son.

## Hasina missing

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The premier wrapped up her speech at 9:37pm.

Earlier, opposition Awami League lawmaker Suranjit Sengupta requested Speaker Jamiruddin Sircar to arrange live telecasting of the opposition leader's speech on the BTv.

"We want equal rights for the leader of the house and leader of the opposition in live broadcasting," Gupta said. However, Sircar did not respond.

## Hasina demands

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corruption and terrorism, She added.

Recalling the prime minister's first speech to the nation and the 100-day programme of her government, Hasina said, "You pledged to run your cabinet with a spirit identical to that in the western democracies. Now I would like to know whether you will resign admitting your failures in line with the tradition of the western democracies?"

"Prime Minister, you will have to tell the House what measures will you take to keep the prices of essentials within the capacity of the common people?" Hasina asked.

"What steps will you [Prime Minister] take to resolve the power crisis in the summer to spare people the ordeals of huge load-shedding?" she asked the leader of the house amid boisterous support from AL lawmakers.

She asked Khaleda whether her government will involve the United Nations in investigating the major crimes including the August 21 grenade attacks, murder of former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria, arms seizures in Chittagong, Bogra and Kuril of Dhaka, and all political killings under the rule of four-party alliance.

The former prime minister also wanted to know whether the cabinet members who have been accused of harbouring militants will be expelled from the government.

"Would you please inform the House when your government will separate the judiciary from the executive as per your electoral pledge?" she asked.

She demanded the government take immediate measures to make the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) a truly independent body.

In reference to Tarique Rahman, son of the incumbent prime minister, Hasina said she wonders how come a joint secretary general of a political party inaugurate an air base of the Bangladesh Air Force. Seeking an explanation from the prime minister, she said why should the chief of NSI [National Security Intelligence] accompany the senior joint secretary general in his visit to the US.

"I want to know from the prime minister is it true that Hawa Bhaban runs as a parallel power house against the Prime Minister's Office," said the former prime minister.

During her address, Hasina demanded the motion of thanks on the president's speech be withdrawn as, she said, the speech itself has that government's development has been diminished due to militancy and terrorism.

55 die

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was searching the remote area for the rebels.

India's Maoists have bases in several states and have recently stepped up attacks. They say they are fighting for greater economic and social rights for tribes and landless farmers in rural areas.

Damragua, 500 km south of the state capital Raipur, is a stronghold of Maoists who claim to be fighting for the rights of peasants and landless labourers.

Maoists, who operate in at least nine of the country's 29 states, have stepped up attacks in the past year, killing dozens of people including police.

Security analysts say New Delhi has not taken the Maoist threat in the country seriously. India's home ministry said there are about 9,300 Maoist guerrillas operating in the country. (Reuters, AFP)

## Telecom deal

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procurement will also be very high," noted a top official.

During the previous Awami League (AL) government's tenure, the same Chinese company set up a digital telephone exchange with very low quality equipment. When the BNP-led coalition came to power, the cabinet members, especially Saifur Rahman, severely criticised that procurement.

"But now the same company is being favoured with a very unfavourable loan and bidding terms, which will unnecessarily and unjustifiably impose millions of dollars of debt burden on the people of Bangladesh," the official added.

The BTB has around 600 telephone exchanges across the country, 75 percent of them digital. The remaining 25 percent exchanges situated at upazila level badly need modernisation.

It now provides 1.1 million phone lines but it is unable to meet the demand for more than 500,000 new ones due to lack of expansion of its exchanges, sources pointed out.

At the fog end of its tenure, the previous AL government had hurriedly signed a \$300 million land phone deal with WorldTel through a flawed bid. Some policymakers of that government allegedly received huge amounts in bribe in the name of "election fund" from WorldTel.

Later, the present government suspended the project on grounds of corruption and irregularities.

# 14-party blocks roads

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said if the incumbent government does not meet their demands they will forge a mass uprising to topple the government.

AL Presidium Member Abdur Razzak alleged that the BNP-Jamaat alliance government did not allow the opposition to speak in the parliament on power, fertiliser and fuel crises or on implementing their demands.

"As they (government) did not take any initiative to solve the ongoing crises, we had to take to the streets," Razzak said adding that the alliance rulers have failed to run the country. The students cannot study due to power outages and the farmers cannot cultivate due to the immense crises of fertiliser and seeds. Power outages led to a price hike of fuels also, he said.

Leaders of the 14-party Syed Zafar Sazzad, Mir Hossain Akther, Qamrul Ansan, MA Gani, Pankaj Bhattacharya, Sharif Nurul Ambia, Shubid Ali Bhuiyan, Rahmat Ullah, Omar Ali, Hazi Mohammad Selim, and MA Karim among others also spoke.

Motia Chowdhury, Habibur Rahman Mollah, Harun-or-Rashid Munna, Mamunur Rashid Suvo, Gaffer Dewan Razib and Sajib Babu staged a separate sit-in on the same highway about 50 feet away from the main venue of the programme, where no one addressed the gathering.

Jatiya Krishak Samity and Khetmojur Union jointly organised a rally at Muktangan in the capital yesterday in protest at the existing crises of fertiliser, diesel and electricity.

Addressing the rally the leaders of the organisations alleged that anti-farmer policies of the BNP-Jamaat-led government are responsible for the crises. Presided over by Krishak Samity leader Anisur Rahman Mollik the rally was addressed by Nurul Hasan and Aminul Islam.

The 14-party observed a two-hour sit-in at Shaheb Bazar Zero Point in Rajshahi protesting frequent power outages, unprecedented diesel and fertiliser crises and the price hike of daily essentials, reports our Rajshahi University (RU) correspondent.

Leaders at the rally, presided over by Fazle Hossain Badshah, demanded immediate resignation of the BNP-Jamaat government for its failure to run the country properly. They urged the people to launch a tougher movement against the government.

The rally was addressed among others by former state minister Zinatun Nesa Talukder, Rajshahi District Awami League General Secretary Omar Faruk, Mahila AL's Central Vice-president Akter Zahan, and JSD City General Secretary Abdullah Al Masud Shibli.

# Petrobangla asks

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company for gas purchase.

Petrobangla's director (PSC) Raihanul Abedin told the news agency that the organisation would never allow any illegal pressure or threat from the Canadian operator.

In its letter to Niko, Petrobangla also mentioned: "We are carefully scrutinising the draft GPSA (gas purchase and sales agreement)...If the shutdown has any connection with finalisation of the GPSA, it appears to be unnecessary at this point of time when negotiation has not even started."

The conflict over the gas price issue remained unsettled since commencement of Niko's gas production from Feni field, which had been producing about 20 mmcf gas per day.

Earlier, Petrobangla made a partial payment against its gas purchase from Feni field at an interim price. But later, a court order halted all kinds of government payment to Niko.

Niko demanded of the govern-

The opposition coalition activists blocked the Sathkira-Khulna highway in front of Patkelghata Pali Bidyut Office and farmers observed a token hunger strike for two and a half hours nearby demanding electricity and fertiliser, reports our Sathkira correspondent.

Later, the activists withdrew the roadblock and the farmers agreed to break their fasts following an assurance from the local administration of fertiliser supply in 24 hours.

Our Jessore correspondent reports that several hundred 14-party activists and leaders blocked different roads including the Dhaka-Jessore and Benapole-Jessore highways demanding fertiliser, electricity, diesel and seeds.

The coalition also staged a demonstration in front of the Netrakona district AL office on the same issue reports our Netrakona correspondent. The police arrested two AL activists of Madan Upazila from the sit-in programme.

## Warehouse

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The traders, garment workers, and others inside the three-storey building came out hurriedly using four staircases.

The shop was gutted but workers managed to defuse the fire using 23 gas cylinders before it could spread to other parts of the building.

Disciplined action of the people helped to avert a disaster, said a shop owner of the building.

Work in the garments factory on the second floor of the building remained suspended for two hours following the incident.

## 22 JMB cadres

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The investigation officer, Sub-inspector Bazlar Rahman, submitted a charge sheet against five accused on November 11. Thirty witnesses were cross-examined during the trial.

After the pronouncement of the sentence, Akhtar said, such judgments will not be able to stop 'the movement' against bribery and corruption. "We will carry on our mission to establish Islamic rule in place of the man made law," he said.

Public Prosecutor Md Nurul Haque prosecuted the case while advocates, Mokhesur Rahman, ATM Masud and Abdul Khalique represented the defendants.

ment to support it in its legal battle to removing the court order.

But such a demand by the Canadian operator was dismissed by Bapex, the state-owned petroleum exploration wing of Petrobangla, with which Niko signed the JVA to develop Feni and Tengratila gas fields.

## Ashraful

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leg-spinner Malinga Bandara, who also dismissed Bashar (29) with the first ball of the his next over just before the lunch break.

When Ashraful came to bat, Bangladesh were struggling at 81-3. He shared 64 runs for the fourth wicket with Shahriar Nafees and added 65 with Khaled Mashud. The home team went for the tea break with a satisfying 191-4, but lost wickets at regular intervals in the final session with Ashraful becoming the eighth man out.

Malinga was the other successful Sri Lanka bowler claiming three wickets for 55 while Bandara took 2-61.

# JMB Shura man

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JMB chief Abdur Rahman on December 13, and Abdul Awal, Rahman's son-in-law, on November 18 last year.

"We've caught Hafez Mahmud," said a top Rab official yesterday evening preferring anonymity. "We'll disclose details about him and the operation later as we are launching follow-up operation taking him along with us," he added.

Sources said being confirmed on Monday that Mahmud will come to meet a person in Baitul Mukarram mosque yesterday, Rab members deployed their forces in the area in guises of beggars and small vendors to nab him.

The elite force had been receiving information about his movement for the last few days, they added.

According to sources, Rab members took Mahmud along with them and raided four to five places in and outside the capital following information extracted from him. A Rab team has also started for Sylhet for conducting further raids.

During primary interrogation, Mahmud told the Rab members that he does not know the whereabouts of JMB chief Abdur Rahman and operations commander Siddiqul Islam alias Bangla Bhai as he has no contact with them since August

## Private sector

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called money are high now. The BB aims to bring down the rates of private-sector credit growth to 13.9 percent, net government credit growth to 26.5 percent and other public sector credit growth to 29.4 percent by June 2006.

Due to an unrelenting depreciation of taka, the import growth has slackened substantially. The growth rate came down to 12.10 percent in the first half of FY06 from 22.84 percent in the same period in FY05.

The growth rate of letter of credit (LC) opening also dipped to 1.87 percent in July-January of the current FY from 23.20 percent in the corresponding period of FY05.

Import is becoming costlier everyday as the value of taka has eroded substantially over the last one month. The price of US dollar yesterday reached as high as Tk 71.40 in LC opening.

Sources said some banks even sold dollar at more than Tk 75 to the importers. The dollar price was around Tk 66 in September 2005.

The average interest rate on lending increased from 10.93 percent in June 2005 to 11.15 percent in September. Banking sources said the rate is still on the rise.

The tight monetary policy has also decelerated the inflation. The point-to-point inflation that was 7.68 percent in July 2005 dipped to 7.07 percent in December.

The overall deficit in the BoP has also dipped. For instance, the BoP deficit declined by \$262 million over a single month, from \$369 at end-November to \$107 million at end-December.

In the first half of FY05, the BoP posted a surplus of \$393 million.

## Probe finds flaws

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concerned for the negligence and irresponsibility that led to the accident and the casualties, Amrinal said

BSJCIC, DIFE and BGMEA also could not avoid their responsibility in this respect.

He also came down hard on the Fire Service for providing the factory authorities clearance for workshop warehouse licence though the later lacked in equipment and measures for preventing and fighting any fire incident.

The probe committee recommended reformation and strengthening of the DIFE, a separate regulatory body for constant supervision of the garment factories and setting up a boiler inspection office in Chittagong where hundreds of factories are located.

## Hearing

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12-point directives in judiciary separation case.

Other members of the bench are Justice Mohammad Ruhul Amin, Justice MM Ruhul Amin, Justice Tafazzal Islam and Justice Amrinal Kabir Chowdhury

On February 22, the Appellate Division fixed March 1 for hearing the contempt rule.

On the same day, Barrister M Amir-UI Islam, counsel for the Judiciary separation case, filed the contempt petition against the nine for 'violating at different times' the 12-point directives of the Supreme Court in the judgement of the Masdar Hossain versus Bangladesh case, popularly known as judiciary separation case.

The nine bureaucrats are Prime Minister's Principal Secretary Kamal Uddin Siddiqui, Law Secretary Alauddin Sardar, former law secretary Md Asaduzzaman, Establishment Secretary Mahubur Rahman, Cabinet Secretary ASM Abdul Halim, Home Secretary and former establishment secretary Safar Raj Hossain, former establishment secretary Anwarul Bar Chowdhury, Finance Secretary Zakir Ahmed Khan and former finance secretary Siddiqur Rahman.

On February 22, Attorney General AJ Mohammad Ali, submitted through affidavit the government's steps undertaken on the Supreme Court's 12-point directives.

The accused nine government officials against whom the Supreme Court issued contempt rule for distorting the judgement of the Masdar Hossain case will have to appear in person before the Appellate Division this morning, as the apex court did not exempt the accused officials from the contempt charge and personal appearance before the court.

The accused nine government officials are Joint Secretaries of the Establishment Ministry Lokman Hakim, Badrul Alam Tarafdar and Md Abdur Rab Hawlader, Deputy Secretary Md Abul Kalam Azad Chowdhury and Senior Assistant Secretary Md Khalilur Rahman, Deputy Secretary of the Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Ministry Shafiqul Islam Talukder and senior Assistant Secretary Mohammad Harunur Rashid, and Deputy Secretaries of the Cabinet Division Md Fazlul Huq and AKM Motaleb Hossain of finance ministry.

## AK47 rifles

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The arrestees are: Shukra Kumar Chakma and Lakhi Chakma. They were handed over to Lakkhichhari police after interrogation, said army sources.

The security forces seized one sub-machinegun, one AK22 rifle, 13 SBL guns, one shutter gun, three pistols, 15 light guns, seven revolvers, 33 country made guns and 600 litres of liquor in the district in the last one year.

# 41 killed as blasts

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al-Mohammedawi said. Initial police reports indicated a mortar blast. There were no reports of casualties.

Elsewhere in Iraq, the US military said an American soldier of the Multinational Division-Baghdad was killed by small arms fire Monday west of Baghdad. The death brought to at least 2,292 the number of members of the US military who have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. The figure includes seven military civilians.

Two British soldiers were also killed in Amarah, 180 miles southeast of Baghdad, the Defence Ministry reported in London, but gave no other details. A witness said a car bomb targeted a British patrol and helicopters were seen taking away casualties.

Iraqi soldiers found the bullet-riddled bodies of nine people near two burned minibuses in Iraq's strife-prone Diyala province, police said. The victims included Sheikh Hamid Irbat Ghazi, a Sunni Muslim of the influential Mahamedh tribe, and two of his nephews, police said.

In Tikrit, near Saddam's birthplace north of Baghdad, a bomb blast damaged a dome and blew out the doors and windows at the Hussein al-Majid mosque, which houses his father's grave, police Capt. Qais Abdul-Majid said. There were no reports of injuries.

Sectarian clashes had declined sharply since the bloodletting that followed the destruction of the Shia shrine in Samarra on Wednesday. Baghdad residents had returned to their jobs after three days of a government-imposed curfew.

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari in Ankara, called on Iraqi leaders to work together and avoid provocations to defuse the violence that threatens to create unrest in the region.

"The Iraqi issue is of vital importance," Erdogan said. "Turkey fervently wants the environment of conflict and violence to be eliminated and for the common sense to take its place."

Crying relatives, meanwhile, went to Baghdad's main morgue to collect the bodies of family members killed in the spasm of violence in the past week. Many of the mourners were women dressed in black who beat their breasts as they wailed in grief.

One young man, who refused to give his name, told an AP reporter his three brothers had gone out to buy bread Saturday night and were gunned down in a drive-by attack.

So far, officials at the morgue said 249 bodies had been brought to the facility since Wednesday. The Interior Ministry had only confirmed 216 deaths since the shrine attack, but it relies on death certificates from around the country and the process can be slow.

The Washington Post reported Tuesday that more than 1,300 Iraqis had been killed since the shrine attack.

# Bush flies in India

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many see as the world's bully.

The landmark nuclear pact has, for many here, come to illustrate what India stands to gain from America and what it has to lose.

Talks on the nuclear deal "are currently at a delicate stage," held up by disagreements over which of India's nuclear facilities are to be designated as civilian and which are to be considered military, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh told lawmakers Monday. Separating India's tightly entwined civilian and military nuclear programmes is key to the deal, because the United States has only agreed to recognise India as having a civilian nuclear programme not as a legitimate nuclear weapons state.

"We have judged every proposal" from the US, Singh said. "The decision of what facilities may be identified as civilian will be made by India alone and not by anyone else."

The pact would allow the United States to provide nuclear technology and fuel desperately needed by India to fuel its booming but energy-starved economy. In return, India has pledged to separate its programmes and open the civilian ones to international inspection.

The deal has faced opposition from some members of US Congress, which must approve the pact. They argue it could undermine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. India has refused to sign the treaty and defied the world by openly conducting nuclear weapons tests in 1998. India and Pakistan have often staged tit-for-tat missile tests that raise regional tensions.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said the president's approach with the pact will not only address energy needs for India, but will also address important proliferation issues.

"We've made some progress. The negotiations are ongoing," he said. "Whether it gets done during the trip or not, we will see. But we believe it will get done."

Indian opponents worry the United States is pushing to classify far too many of India's facilities as civilian, and thus subject to international safeguards. Some see it as an attempt to undermine the country's nuclear weapons programme.

Among Indians, there is also "a sense of America being arrogant in its dealings surrounding the nuclear pact," said Nandan Unnikrishnan of New Delhi's Observer Research Foundation.

"India does not like to be perceived as someone who is doing something according to an external diktat," he said. "And the US has been a little ham-handed in terms of trying to get India to see the world its

Saddam Hussein's defence lawyers ended their monthlong boycott of his trial, attending proceedings yesterday even though the judge rejected their demands that he step down. Their return gives a boost to a troubled trial.

Saddam's defence team walked out of his trial on Jan. 29 after chief judge Raouf Abdel-Rahman tossed out one of the lawyers for shouting. The defence then said it would boycott the trial unless Abdel-Rahman was removed, accusing him of bias against Saddam. Court-appointed lawyers sat in during sessions over the past month.

Saddam and his seven co-defendants entered the court Tuesday and took their seats silently a rarity since the former Iraqi leader and his half-brother Barzan Ibrahim have shouted slogans or argued with the judge at the start of almost every previous session.

The defendants have been on trial since Oct. 19 in the killing of nearly 150 people from the town of Duji al after a 1982 assassination attempt against Saddam there. They face death by hanging if convicted.